UNITED
NATIONS

HRI

International
Human Rights
Instruments

Distr.
GENERAL

HRI/MC/1999/1
6 April 1999

Original: ENGLISH

Eleventh meeting of chairpersons
of the human rights treaty bodies
Geneva, 31 May-4 June 1999

PROVISIONAL AGENDA AND ANNOTATIONS

Note by the Secretary-General

1. The 11th meeting of chairpersons of the human rights treaty bodies will be held from 31 May to 4 June 1999, pursuant to General Assembly resolution 49/178 of 23 December 1994, in which the Secretary-General was requested to finance, as of 1995, annual meetings of persons chairing the human rights treaty bodies. Prior to their meeting in 1995, the chairpersons had met for the first time in 1984 and biannually from 1988 until 1994.

2. The present document, which was prepared in consultation with the chairpersons, contains the provisional agenda for their 11th meeting, together with annotations relating thereto.

GE.99-41109 (E)

PROVISIONAL AGENDA

1. Opening of the meeting and election of officers.

2. Adoption of the agenda.

3. Organizational and other matters.

4. Review of recent developments relating to the work of the treaty bodies.

5. Cooperation of human rights treaty bodies with United Nations departments, specialized agencies, funds, programmes and mechanisms.

6. Universal ratification.

7. Improving the operation of the human rights treaty bodies:

   (a) Regional sessions;

   (b) Technical briefings;

   (c) Specific measures to enhance cooperation between treaty bodies.

8. Draft plan of action for strengthening the implementation of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination and the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment.

9. Servicing of the treaty bodies.

10. Reservations to the human rights treaties.

11. Right to education.

12. Establishment of indicators/benchmarks to assess the realization of human rights.

13. Informal consultation with governments.

14. Adoption of report.

ANNOTATIONS TO THE PROVISIONAL AGENDA

Item 1. Opening of the meeting and election of officers

The meeting will convene at the United Nations Office at Geneva on Monday, 31 May 1999, at 10 a.m.

Item 2. Adoption of the agenda

The meeting will adopt its agenda on the basis of the provisional agenda contained in the present document.

Item 3. Organizational and other matters

Under this agenda item, the meeting will consider and adopt a programme of work.

Item 4. Review of recent developments relating to the work of the treaty bodies

The Chairperson of the fifty-fifth session of the Commission on Human Rights, Ms. Anne Anderson, and the Chairperson of the fiftieth session of the Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities, Mr. El Hadji Guissé, are invited to address the chairpersons on the relationship between the work of the treaty bodies and the bodies which they represent, in accordance with the practice established at previous meetings.

The chairpersons may wish to present briefly the activities of the treaty body they represent, as well as its working methods, new developments or decisions and challenges. Pursuant to a recommendation adopted at their 8th meeting (see A/52/507, annex, para. 73), the chairpersons will have before them an "activities profile" for each committee describing its salient activities over the past year and including relevant statistics.

Item 5. Cooperation of human rights treaty bodies with United Nations departments, specialized agencies, funds, programmes and mechanisms

United Nations departments, specialized agencies, funds, programmes and mechanisms whose mandates are closely related to the work of the treaty bodies have been invited to be represented at the meeting to exchange views on matters of mutual interest or concern. Information on developments on relations between the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and the United Nations Development Programme is contained in the report of the secretariat (HRI/MC/1999/3). It may be noted that, at the request of the chairpersons at their 8th, 9th and 10th meetings, the present meeting has been scheduled to coincide with the 6th meeting of special rapporteurs/representatives, experts and chairpersons of working groups to facilitate formal and informal discussions designed to coordinate in a more effective manner the activities of the two groups (see A/52/507, annex, para. 50; A/53/125, annex, para. 44; A/53/432, annex, para. 15). The chairperson of the meeting of special rapporteurs/representatives, experts and chairpersons of

working groups will be invited to address the chairpersons on the relationship between their work and that of treaty bodies and time will be reserved for a joint meeting of the two full groups of experts.

Item 6. Universal ratification

The chairpersons at their 10th meeting recommended that OHCHR develop a concerted and comprehensive action programme to promote universal ratification in cooperation with specialized agencies and United Nations funds and programmes, in particular UNDP, and to report to them at their 11th meeting on the action taken in this regard (see A/53/432, annex, para. 58). Information on this subject is contained in the report of the secretariat (HRI/MC/1999/3).

Item 7. Improving the operation of the human rights treaty bodies

(a) Regional sessions

At their 10th meeting, the chairpersons requested that necessary steps be taken to enable the four human rights treaty bodies meeting only in Geneva to hold occasional sessions in New York and for the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women to hold sessions in Geneva. They also requested that the treaty bodies be able to meet, on occasion, in other United Nations regional offices (see A/53/432, para. 61). The cost estimates associated with the organization of regional sessions requested by the chairpersons at their 8th meeting is before them (HRI/MC/1999/Misc.1). The chairpersons may wish to consider this item further.

(b) Technical briefings

The chairpersons at their 10th meeting recommended that a programme of technical briefings for committee experts be developed on the basis of the proposal presented by the secretariat during that meeting and incorporating their suggestions (ibid., para. 62). A revised proposal of the secretariat will be presented to the chairpersons for their consideration (HRI/MC/1999/Misc.2).

(c) Specific measures to enhance cooperation between treaty bodies

The chairpersons may wish to consider specific measures to enhance cooperation between treaty bodies. For instance, experts could be invited to attend part of the sessions of other committees when their attendance is relevant for the work of that committee or his or her own. The possibility of conducting joint programmes relating to "shared" rights could also be explored.

Item. 8 Draft plan of action for strengthening the implementation of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of racial Discrimination and the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment

The chairpersons at their 10th meeting examined a draft plan of action prepared by the secretariat for strengthening the implementation of the above treaties. They requested that the secretariat revise the draft plan, in close consultation with their chairperson, for discussion at the 11th meeting. The revised plan will be before the chairpersons (HRI/MC/1999/Misc.3). In addition, the report of the secretariat on follow-up to the 10th meeting (HRI/MC/1999/3) will contain information on the status of the Plans of Action for strengthening the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, which are currently in operation.

Item 9. Servicing of the treaty bodies

On several occasions, the chairpersons have expressed concern at the inadequate staffing situation that had resulted in serious difficulties in the functioning of the treaty bodies, including a heavy backlog in processing communications. The chairpersons will have information in the report of the secretariat (HRI/MC/1999/3) on the outlook for the servicing of the treaty bodies in the forthcoming 2000-2001 biennium.

Item 10. Reservations to the human rights treaties

The chairpersons may wish to continue their discussion of the preliminary conclusions adopted by the International Law Commission at its forty-seventh session relating to reservations to normative multilateral treaties, including human rights treaties. At their 10th meeting, the chairpersons agreed to pursue the consideration of the preliminary conclusions in their respective committees with a view to formulating their comments and forwarding them to the International Law Commission as soon as possible (ibid., para. 52). The chairpersons will have before them those preliminary conclusions.

Item 11. Right to education

During its day of general discussion on the right to education, held during its nineteenth session in December 1998, the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights proposed that a workshop be held on the subject of indicators for the right to education. The proposal for the workshop, which is envisioned as a cooperative enterprise of the treaty bodies, will be presented by the Chairperson of the Committee. The chairpersons will have before them the summary records of the day of general discussion (E/C.12/1999/SR.49 and 50).

Item 12. Establishment of indicators/benchmarks to assess the realization of human rights

In recent years, there have been growing calls for the establishment of indicators and benchmarks to assess the realization of human rights. The chairpersons will have before them a background paper prepared by the secretariat on this issue.

Item 13. Informal consultation with governments

Following the experience of the 9th and 10th meetings, where the chairpersons engaged in a fruitful dialogue with representatives of States parties of the the human rights treaties on the work of the treaty bodies and on their reform, States parties are invited to send representatives to continue their dialogue with the chairpersons on the afternoon of 3 June 1999 (date subject to confirmation).

Item 14. Adoption of report

The chairpersons will adopt a report on their meeting, including conclusions and recommendations, to be submitted to the fifty-fifth session of the General Assembly, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 53/138.

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HRI

International
Human Rights
Instruments

Distr.
GENERAL

HRI/MC/1999/2
30 April 1999

Original: ENGLISH

Eleventh meeting of the chairpersons
of the human rights treaty bodies
Geneva, 31 May-4 June 1999

STATUS OF THE INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS INSTRUMENTS AND THE GENERAL SITUATION OF OVERDUE REPORTS

Report of the Secretary-General

1. The present report contains updated information on the status of the international human rights instruments and the general situation of overdue reports as at 30 March 1999 in regard to the following six instruments:

(a) The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, adopted by the General Assembly on 16 December 1966 and entered into force on 3 January 1976 (ICESCR);

(b) The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, adopted by the General Assembly on 16 December 1966 and entered into force on 23 March 1976 (ICCPR);

(c) The International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, adopted by the General Assembly on 21 December 1965 and entered into force on 4 January 1969 (CERD);

(d) The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, adopted by the General Assembly on 18 December 1979 and entered into force on 3 September 1981 (CEDAW);

(e) The Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, adopted by the General Assembly on 10 December 1984 and entered into force on 26 June 1987 (CAT);

(f) The Convention on the Rights of the Child, adopted by the General Assembly on 20 November 1989 and entered into force on 2 September 1990 (CRC).

GE.99-41399 (E)

State party	ICCPR	ICESCR	CERD	CEDAW	CAT	CRC	Total reports overdue	Total treaties ratified
Afghanistan	1	1	7		2	1	12	5
Albania	2	1	2	1	1	2	9	6
Algeria	0	1	2	0	1	0	4	6
Andorra				1		1	2	2
Angola	2	1		3		2	8	4
Antigua and Barbuda			5	0	2	1	8	4
Argentina	0	0	1	1	0	1	3	6
Armenia	0	0	1	1	1	0	3	6
Australia	0	0	3	0	2	1	6	6
Austria	1	1	0	0	1	0	3	6
Azerbaijan	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	6
Bahamas			9	2		1	12	3
Bahrain			0		1	2	3	3
Bangladesh		0	5	0	0	1	6	5
Barbados	2	2	5	2		1	12	5
Belarus	0	0	1	2	1	1	5	6
Belgium	0	0	2	0		1	3	5
Belize	1			0	2	1	4	4
Benin	2	1		2	2	1	8	5
Bhutan				5		2	7	2
Bolivia	0	2	1	1	0	0	4	6
Bosnia and Herzegovina	0	1	3	2	2	2	10	6
Botswana			8	1		1	10	3
Brazil	1	1	2	4	3	2	13	6
Brunei Darussalam						1	1	1
Bulgaria	1	0	1	2	1	1	6	6
Burkina Faso	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	6
Burundi	1	2	1	2	2	1	9	6
Cambodia	1	1	1	2	2	0	7	6
Cameroon	0	1	0	1	2	1	5	6
Canada	0	0	2	1	1	1	5	6
Cape Verde	1	1	8	5	2	1	18	6
Central African Republic	3	2	7	2		0	14	5
Chad	1	1	2	1	1	1	7	6
Chile	0	1	0	1	2	0	4	6
China			2	1	1	1	5	4
Colombia	0	0	0	1	1	0	2	6
Comoros				1		0	1	2
Congo	1	2	5	4		2	14	5
Cook Islands						0	0	1
Costa Rica	0	2	0	3	2	0	7	6
Côte d'Ivoire	2	1	9	1	1	1	15	6
Croatia	2	2	1	1	0	1	7	6
Cuba			1	2	0	1	4	4
Cyprus	1	0	1	2	0	1	5	6
Czech Republic	1	1	1	1	1	0	5	6
Democratic People's Republic of Korea	3	2				1	6	3
Democratic Republic of the Congo	3	2	1	0	1	2	9	6
Denmark	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	6
Djibouti				0		1	1	2

State party	ICCPR	ICESCR	CERD	CEDAW	CAT	CRC	Total reports overdue	Total treaties ratified
Dominica	1	1		5		2	9	4
Dominican Republic	1	0	0	0		1	2	5
Ecuador	1	2	3	2	1	1	10	6
Egypt	1	1	3	2	0	0	7	6
El Salvador	2	1	2	3	1	1	10	6
Equatorial Guinea	2	2		1		1	6	4
Eritrea				1		1	2	2
Estonia	1	1	4	2	2	2	12	6
Ethiopia	1	1	5	2	1	0	10	6
Fiji			8	1		0	9	3
Finland	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	6
France	0	2	3	2	1	1	9	6
Gabon	0	2	1	3		1	7	5
Gambia	3	2	9	2		2	18	5
Georgia	0	0		0	0	0	0	5
Germany	0	0	2	0	0	1	3	6
Ghana			0	2		1	3	3
Greece	1	2	3	1	1	1	9	6
Grenada	2	2		2		1	7	4
Guatemala	1	1	1	2	1	0	6	6
Guinea	1	2	0	4	3	1	11	6
Guinea-Bissau		1		4		2	7	3
Guyana	3	0	11	4	3	2	23	6
Haiti	1		4	5		1	11	4
Holy See			3			1	4	2
Honduras	1	1		1	1	0	4	5
Hungary	1	1	2	2	0	1	7	6
Iceland	1	0	1	0	0	0	2	6
India	0	2	1	1		0	4	5
Indonesia				1	0	1	2	3
Iran (Islamic Republic of)	1	1	0			0	2	4
Iraq	1	0	1	0		0	2	5
Ireland	0	1		0		0	1	4
Israel	1	0	1	0	0	2	4	6
Italy	0	0	1	1	0	1	3	6
Jamaica	0	1	7	0		1	9	5
Japan	0	1	2	0		0	3	5
Jordan	1	1	0	1	1	0	4	6
Kazakhstan			0	0	0	1	1	4
Kenya	3	0		2	1	2	8	5
Kiribati						1	1	1
Kuwait	0	1	1	1	0	1	4	6
Kyrgyzstan	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	6
Lao People's Democratic Republic			7	5		1	13	3
Latvia	1	1	0	2	2	0	6	6
Lebanon	0	1	1	1		0	3	5
Lesotho	1	1	0	1		1	4	5
Liberia			11	4		1	16	3
Libyan Arab Jamahiriya	0	1	1	1	0	0	3	6
Liechtenstein	0	0		0	0	0	0	5
Lithuania	0	1	0	1	1	1	4	6

State party	ICCPR	ICESCR	CERD	CEDAW	CAT	CRC	Total reports overdue	Total treaties ratified
Luxembourg	1	1	1	0	1	0	4	6
Madagascar	3	2	5	2		2	14	5
Malawi	1	1	1	2	1	2	8	6
Malaysia				1		1	2	2
Maldives			3	1		1	5	3
Mali	3	2	6	3	0	1	15	6
Malta	1	2	0	2	0	1	6	6
Marshall Islands						0	0	1
Mauritania			0			2	2	2
Mauritius	1	1	1	2	0	1	6	6
Mexico	0	0	1	1	0	0	2	6
Micronesia (Federated States of)						0	0	1
Monaco	1	0	2		1	1	5	5
Mongolia	0	0	1	1		1	3	5
Morocco	0	0	1	1	0	0	2	6
Mozambique	1		7	1		1	10	4
Myanmar				1		1	2	2
Namibia	1	1	1	1	0	1	5	6
Nauru						1	1	1
Nepal	1	2	1	1	1	1	7	6
Netherlands	2	0	1	0	0	0	3	6
New Zealand	2	1	2	0	1	0	6	6
Nicaragua	2	1	2	1		0	6	5
Niger	2	2	1		0	2	7	5
Nigeria	0	0	2	1		1	4	5
Niue						1	1	1
Norway	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	6
Oman						1	1	1
Pakistan			1	1		1	3	3
Palau						0	0	1
Panama	3	1	0	2	0	1	7	6
Papua New Guinea			8	1		1	10	3
Paraguay	1	0		1	1	0	3	5
Peru	0	1	1	0	0	0	2	6
Philippines	2	1	1	1	2	1	8	6
Poland	0	0	1	2	0	1	4	6
Portugal	2	0	0	2	0	0	4	6
Qatar			3			1	4	2
Republic of Korea	0	1	0	0	0	1	2	6
Republic of Moldova	1	1	3	0	1	1	7	6
Romania	0	1	0	2	1	1	5	6
Russian Federation	1	0	1	1	1	0	4	6
Rwanda	3	2	5	2		1	13	5
Saint Kitts and Nevis				4		1	5	2
Saint Lucia			5	4		1	10	3
Saint Vincent and the Grenadines	3	2	8	2		1	16	5
Samoa				2		1	3	2
San Marino	2	2				1	5	3
Sao Tome and Principe						2	2	1
Saudi Arabia			1		1	0	2	3
Senegal	0	1	3	2	1	1	8	6
Seychelles	2	1	5	2	2	2	14	6

State party	ICCPR	ICESCR	CERD	CEDAW	CAT	CRC	Total reports overdue	Total treaties ratified
Sierra Leone	1	1	12	3		1	18	5
Singapore				1		1	2	2
Slovakia	0	1	3	1	3	0	8	6
Slovenia	1	1	3	1	2	1	9	6
Solomon Islands		2	7			1	10	3
Somalia	2	2	8		3		15	4
South Africa	0		1	0	0	0	1	5
Spain	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	6
Sri Lanka	1	1	3	3	1	1	10	6
Sudan	0	1	3			1	5	4
Suriname	3	1	7	2		0	13	5
Swaziland			1			1	2	2
Sweden	0	0	2	1	0	0	3	6
Switzerland	0	0	1	1	0	1	3	6
Syrian Arab Republic	3	1	0			0	4	4
Tajikistan	0	0	2	2	1	0	5	6
Thailand	1			1		0	2	3
The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia	1	2	1	2	0	1	7	6
Togo	1	2	8	4	3	1	19	7
Tonga			1			1	2	2
Trinidad and Tobago	2	2	3	3		1	11	5
Tunisia	1	0	3	2	1	1	8	6
Turkey				1	2	1	4	3
Turkmenistan	1	0	2	1		1	5	5
Tuvalu						1	1	1
Uganda	1	2	8	2	3	1	17	6
Ukraine	0	0	1	2	0	1	4	6
United Arab Emirates			1			1	2	2
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	6
United Republic of Tanzania	1	2	6	1		2	12	5
United States of America	1		2		1		4	4
Uruguay	1	0	0	2	1	1	5	6
Uzbekistan	1	1	2	1	1	1	7	6
Vanuatu				1		0	1	2
Venezuela	1	1	2	1	1	1	7	6
Viet Nam	2	1	3	3		1	10	5
Yemen	1	2	3	1	2	0	9	6
Yugoslavia	1	0	1	2	1	1	6	6
Zambia	1	2	3	2	0	2	10	6
Zimbabwe	1	1	0	1		1	4	5
Total reports overdue	140	130	388	239	102	156	1 155	
Total ratifications	144	141	153	163	114	191		906

UNITED
NATIONS

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International
Human Rights
Instruments

Distr.
GENERAL

HRI/MC/1999/2/Corr.1
18 May 1999

Original: ENGLISH

Eleventh meeting of the chairpersons
of the human rights treaty bodies
Geneva, 31 May-4 June 1999

STATUS OF THE INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS INSTRUMENTS AND THE GENERAL SITUATION OF OVERDUE REPORTS

Corrigendum

The rows of the chart contained in document HRI/MC/1999/2 relating to the following States parties should be replaced as indicated below.

State party	ICCPR	ICESCR	CERD	CEDAW	CAT	CRC	Total reports overdue	Total treaties ratified
Austria	0	1	0	0	1	0	2	6
Bosnia and Herzegovina	1	1	3	2	2	2	11	6
Cyprus	0	0	1	2	0	1	4	6
Ecuador	0	2	3	2	1	1	9	6
Iceland	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	6
Iraq	0	0	1	0		0	1	5
Israel	0	0	1	0	0	2	3	6
The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia	0	2	1	2	0	1	6	6
United Republic of Tanzania	0	2	6	1		2	11	5
Uruguay	0	0	0	2	1	1	4	6
Zimbabwe	0	1	0	1		1	3	5
Total reports overdue	131	130	388	239	102	156	1 146	
Total ratifications	144	141	153	163	114	191		906

GE.99-42048 (E)

UNITED
NATIONS

HRI

International
Human Rights
Instruments

Distr.
GENERAL

HRI/MC/1999/3
15 April 1999

Original: ENGLISH

Eleventh meeting of persons chairing
the human rights treaty bodies
Geneva, 31 May-4 June 1999
Items 5, 6, 7 and 9 of the provisional agenda

COOPERATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS TREATY BODIES WITH UNITED NATIONS DEPARTMENTS, SPECIALIZED AGENCIES, FUNDS, PROGRAMMES AND MECHANISMS

UNIVERSAL RATIFICATION

IMPROVING THE OPERATION OF THE HUMAN RIGHTS TREATY BODIES

SERVICING OF THE TREATY BODIES

Follow up to the recommendations of the 10th meeting

Report of the secretariat

GE.99-41203 (E)

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INTRODUCTION

1. At their 10th meeting, the chairpersons discussed, inter alia, the issues of cooperation with United Nations departments, specialized agencies, funds, programmes and mechanisms; universal ratification of the principal international human rights treaties; improving the operation of the treaty monitoring bodies; servicing of the treaty bodies; and status of the Plans of Action to strengthen the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. At that meeting, the chairpersons adopted a number of recommendations relating to these issues. The present report contains information on relevant developments in these areas. Information on other issues dealt with at the 10th meeting of chairpersons that require follow-up are provided in separate documents.

I. COOPERATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS TREATY BODIES WITH UNITED NATIONS DEPARTMENTS, SPECIALIZED AGENCIES, FUNDS, PROGRAMMES AND MECHANISMS

2. At their 10th meeting, the chairpersons underlined the importance of the supportive work of and fruitful cooperation with a number of specialized agencies, United Nations bodies and non-governmental organizations. The chairpersons were informed of ongoing cooperation between the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) being undertaken pursuant to the memorandum of understanding concluded between the two bodies in March 1998. Areas in which cooperation was actively being pursued included the programme "Human rights strengthening - HURIST", human rights training for UNDP staff, and involvement in the work of the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (A/53/432, annex, paras. 21-23).

3. Since that meeting, OHCHR and UNDP have consulted extensively on the elements of the joint programme HURIST. The two bodies have concluded the design of the programme and launched it in April 1999. The programme aims to make funds and expertise available to UNDP country offices for a wide variety of human rights-related activities. There will be five main groups of activities under HURIST (referred to as "windows"). **Window 1** is placed in the governance context and is aimed at developing institutional capacity to develop national plans for the promotion of human rights. Pilot cases will be undertaken in five countries, one in each region. **Window 2** will support five pilot projects demonstrating human rights approaches to sustainable human development (SHD). **Window 3** will promote the ratification of human rights treaties through workshops and seminars. **Window 4** aims to foster a global dialogue on the human rights dimensions of key subjects, beginning with globalization. **Window 5** will respond to requests from countries for programming support in the field of human rights, provide funding for United Nations volunteers serving in UNDP country offices and facilitate interaction between HURIST and regional-level activities in the field of human rights.

4. Considerable progress has also been made in relation to the training of UNDP staff (see para. 14).

5. As indicated at the 10th meeting of chairpersons, UNDP has begun to become more actively involved in the work of the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. On the day of general discussion of the Committee on the right to education, held in December 1998, UNDP joined other agencies in contributing a background paper and participating in the discussion. In addition, a number of UNDP field offices have contributed valuable information on the situation of human rights in States whose reports were being considered by the Committee and the office in Santo Domingo supported members of the Committee during their mission to the Dominican Republic on the right to housing.

6. Further pursuant to the memorandum of understanding, OHCHR and UNDP will ensure that the concluding observations of all treaty bodies are made available to UNDP resident representatives. In this regard, OHCHR has requested the Department of Public Information of the Secretariat to ensure that, when concluding observations are sent to United Nations Information Centres in the field, they are shared with the local UNDP office as a matter of routine.

II. PROMOTION OF UNIVERSAL RATIFICATION OF THE INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS TREATIES

7. At past meetings, the chairpersons repeatedly called upon the United Nations system as a whole to accord high priority to efforts to encourage and facilitate ratification of each of the six main human rights treaties by every State. At their 10th meeting, they recommended that the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights develop a concerted and comprehensive action programme to promote universal ratification in cooperation with specialized agencies and United Nations funds and programmes, in particular UNDP, and to report to the chairpersons at their 11th meeting on the action taken in this regard.

8. The High Commissioner for Human Rights encourages ratification of the main treaties on an ongoing basis in her dialogue with Governments during country visits and other meetings, as does the Secretary-General of the United Nations. The High Commissioner also encourages other parts of the United Nations system to become actively involved in efforts to promote universal ratification. In this regard, strong advances have been made particularly with regard to one key partner, namely UNDP. UNDP agrees on the importance of promoting universal ratification and has pledged that pursuing it would be the responsibility of all resident representatives in the field. Within the framework of the joint Task Force on the Implementation of the Memorandum of Understanding, OHCHR is preparing to transmit to UNDP basic materials to assist resident representatives in raising the issue with relevant government officials.

9. Attention is also drawn to the joint programme HURIST. As noted in paragraph 3, ratification is one of five main "windows" of activities (window 3). In this connection, HURIST envisages the organization of three workshops at the regional or subregional level with the participation of

States that have ratified the least number of the treaties. Among the participating States, those expressing interest in pursuing the matter in greater depth would have the opportunity to request that a national workshop be organized to familiarize a broader range of national officials with the importance and the implications of ratification.

III. IMPROVING THE OPERATION OF THE HUMAN RIGHTS TREATY BODIES

A. Regional meetings

10. At their 10th meeting, the chairpersons strongly requested that necessary steps be taken to enable the four human rights treaty bodies meeting only in Geneva to hold occasional sessions in New York and for the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women to hold sessions in Geneva. They also requested that the treaty bodies be able to meet, on occasion, in other United Nations regional offices.

11. The Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination has taken the step of formally requesting that a session be held in New York. However, the General Assembly failed to approve the request and no other Geneva-based treaty body has made a formal request to hold a session in New York. Neither has the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women formally requested that one of its sessions be held in Geneva.

B. Provision of human rights training to United Nations personnel in the field

12. Reiterating their view of the importance of providing human rights training to all United Nations personnel in the field, the chairpersons at their 9th meeting encouraged the High Commissioner for Human Rights to implement, as soon as possible, a basic human rights training package for personnel throughout the United Nations system, including UNDP, the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and other relevant agencies (A/53/125, annex, para. 39).

13. Information on training programmes conducted by OHCHR is contained in the report of the secretariat to the 10th meeting of chairpersons (HRI/MC/1998/4, paras. 13-15) and in the report of the Secretary-General on advisory services and technical cooperation in the field of human rights submitted to the fifty-fifth session of the Commission on Human Rights (E/CN.4/1999/99).

14. In addition, considerable progress is being made on the development of human rights training materials for UNDP personnel. A draft training manual on human rights and programming has been prepared by UNDP and is currently under review in consultation with OHCHR. Discussions have also been initiated with the United Nations Staff College in Turin in connection with its possible role in providing human rights training to United Nations development personnel. It is envisaged that the manual would continuously be updated and modified with experience gained from use in training courses, with the first such event foreseen for May 1999.

15. Other training or information initiatives to promote knowledge of human rights norms and procedures in the United Nations system include the development of training materials for development officials through the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) and the elaboration of human rights guidelines for resident coordinators. The UNDAF training materials are being developed through the Working Group on the Right to Development of the United Nations Development Group (UNDG) by training specialists from OHCHR, UNDP, UNICEF and UNFPA. With respect to the guidelines for resident coordinators, draft guidelines will be submitted to the Consultative Committee on Programme and Operational Questions (CCPOQ) of the Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC) for its review and adoption.

IV. SERVICING OF THE TREATY BODIES

16. At their 10th meeting, the chairpersons reiterated their appeals contained in the reports on their 8th and 9th meetings that the specialized secretariat staff servicing the committees be significantly strengthened. The chairpersons expressed the view that the possibility of seeking voluntary funds must be further explored, although adequate provision to human rights treaty bodies should be developed within the regular budget allocated to the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights.

17. As noted by the chairpersons, secretariat staffing requirements for servicing of the five Geneva-based treaty bodies were presented in detail in the report of the secretariat to the 10th meeting (HRI/MC/1998/4) and were compared with the number of posts available. According to the analysis contained in that report, ten and a half additional posts would be required in order to discharge effectively the responsibilities involved in the servicing of the treaty bodies, including with regard to the individual complaints procedures.

18. The proposed programme budget of the United Nations for the biennium 2000-2001 allows for two additional regular posts in relation to servicing of the treaty bodies. The support team recruited under the Plan of Action to strengthen the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child 1/ is able to address the most pressing substantive servicing requirements of the Committee on the Rights of the Child. Similarly, the staff member being recruited under the Plan of Action to strengthen the implementation of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights 1/ will address many of the substantive servicing requirements of the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

19. Pursuant to a recommendation of the chairpersons at their 9th and 10th meetings, a draft plan of action addressing the needs of the three remaining Geneva-based treaty bodies has been presented to the chairpersons and revised in accordance with their comments. The revised draft plan is before the chairpersons (HRI/MC/1999/Misc.1).

1/ See section V.

V. STATUS OF THE PLANS OF ACTION TO STRENGTHEN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CONVENTION ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD AND THE INTERNATIONAL COVENANT ON ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL RIGHTS

20. The Plan of Action to strengthen the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child was launched in November 1996 and became operational in July 1997, when the first members of the support team called for in the Plan were recruited. The voluntary contributions received through the Plan enabled the support provided to the Committee on the Rights of the Child to improve considerably. In particular, a new sophisticated format of country analyses has been developed which has favourably impacted the work of the Committee. A survey of relevant technical cooperation projects that are implemented by OHCHR, UNICEF and other partners has also been conducted as part of an overall effort to facilitate follow-up to the recommendations of the Committee and the design of OHCHR technical cooperation projects. The activities foreseen under the Plan are envisaged to be undertaken by a substantive support team of five Professional staff members, aided by one General Service assistant. The Plan is in its second operational year; extension beyond July 2000 will depend on the availability of funds. As at 9 April 1999, US$ 1,722,210.27 had been contributed under the Plan by the Governments of Australia, Colombia, Cyprus, Denmark, Finland, Ghana, Iceland, Israel, Italy, Luxemburg, Mauritius, Norway, Portugal, the Republic of Korea, South Africa and Sweden and an individual named I. Frankl.

21. The Plan of Action to strengthen the implementation of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights was launched in May 1997 to strengthen the assistance available to the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. The Plan envisages the appointment of a two-member specialist support team and a small activities budget for technical cooperation projects or meetings, also to be financed from voluntary contributions. As at 9 April 1999, US$ 166,947.92 had been received from the Governments of Brazil, Cyprus, France, the Netherlands and Portugal, which is sufficient for the recruitment of one specialist. Consequently, a person has been recruited and is expected to assume her responsibilities with the Committee shortly.